

REMENDER • CRAIG • BOYD

DEADLY CLASS™



1988

#15

The Story So Far...

When homeless orphan Marcus Lopez was asked to join Kings Dominion Atelier of the Deadly Arts, a shadowy school specializing in training the next generation of the world's deadliest assassins, he figured he had nothing left to lose. He was wrong.

Marcus wound up caught between two women, Maria, who desperately loved him, and Saya, who Marcus fell for hard. Unable to withstand Saya's dark charms, Marcus cheated on Maria and has hated himself for it ever since.

The lovers' quarrel came to a head when the family of Maria's former boyfriend, who she murdered to save Marcus's life, came for revenge. In the carnage that ensued, Marcus realized his true feelings for Maria...but it was too late. Murder and deception might be on the curriculum at Kings Dominion, but getting caught is a failure punishable by death.

Maria found this out when she sought to cover her tracks with Headmaster Lin and felt life ebbing from her body as she drank the poison tea he offered in friendship. None of her friends would know the truth of what happened to her.

In the wake of all this, Marcus has slid into a dark pit of guilt, depression, and drugs. In paranoid fever dreams he's convinced himself that it was Saya who orchestrated everything that's happened to him since he arrived at the school, including Maria's disappearance. Saya, now dating his former best friend Willie, only feeds this suspicion.

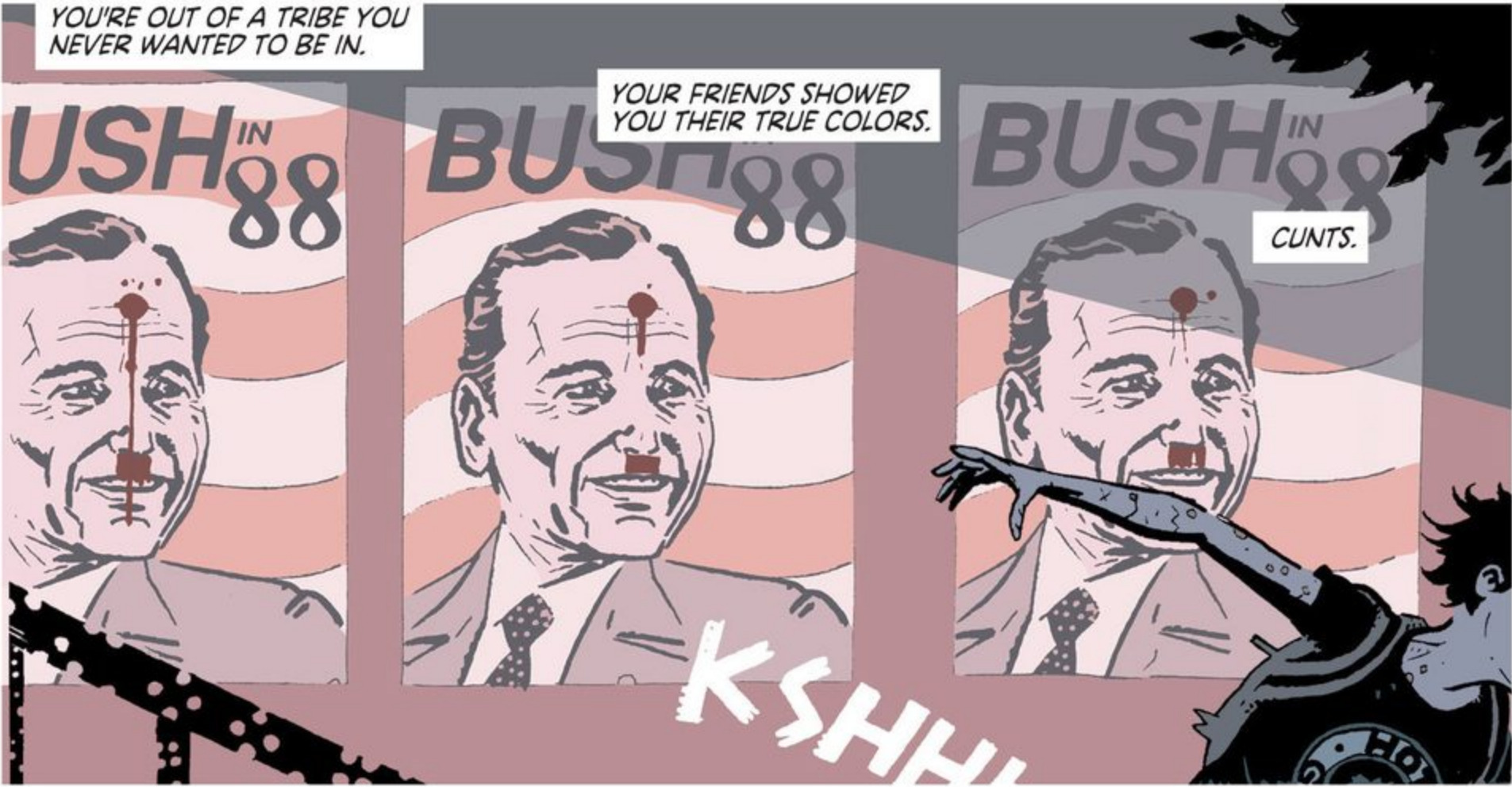
Marcus is on a bad road, burning every bridge behind him and turning his back on all his friends. A road that can only lead to one final destination...

DEADLY CLASS created by Rick Remender & Wes Craig

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YOU'RE OUT OF A TRIBE YOU NEVER WANTED TO BE IN.

YOUR FRIENDS SHOWED YOU THEIR TRUE COLORS.

CUNTS.

SPINELESS POLITICIANS LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE.

HYPNOTICALLY FINGER-FUCKING AN ANCIENT INSTINCT TO SECURE TRIBAL ALLIANCES.

I GET IT. IN THE HARSH WILDERNESS OF OUR EVOLUTION YOU NEEDED THE TRIBE FOR SURVIVAL.



AND WE NEVER LOST THAT INSTINCT.

GANGS OF CAPITULATING ASSHOLES.

EVERY ACTION A POSE TO SECURE ACCEPTANCE.



MONKEYS TRYING TO TRICK OTHER MONKEYS INTO LOVING US SO WE DON'T STARVE IN THE WOODS, SO WE CAN SECURE A MATE--



--SO WE HAVE HELP KILLING ANYONE WHO IS DIFFERENT.

THAT'S WHAT ALL THIS IS.

EVERY BORDER. EVERY NATION. EVERY WAR. EVERY OUNCE OF RACISM. EVERY RELIGION.

TRIBES.

THE ILLUSION OF SAFETY INSIDE A MOB.



I DON'T NEED A CLAN. DON'T NEED A FAMILY.



"I AM A NIGHTMARE WALKING, PSYCHOPATH TALKING, KING OF THE JUNGLE JUST A GANGSTER STALKING--"

YOU'RE AN IDIOT.

I'M BETTER OFF ON MY OWN. ON GUARD.

NO LONGER SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE MY BEST INTEREST AT HEART.

BUT I'M JUST LIKE THEM.
AFRAID AND ALONE, INSTINCTS
SCREAMING FOR ME TO JOIN
A GANG.
TRYING TO FIT IN WITH
THEM FUCKED MY SOUL.



WALK AWAY.
GROW STRONGER
THROUGH
SELF-RELIANCE.
DEAL WITH THEM
ANOTHER DAY.



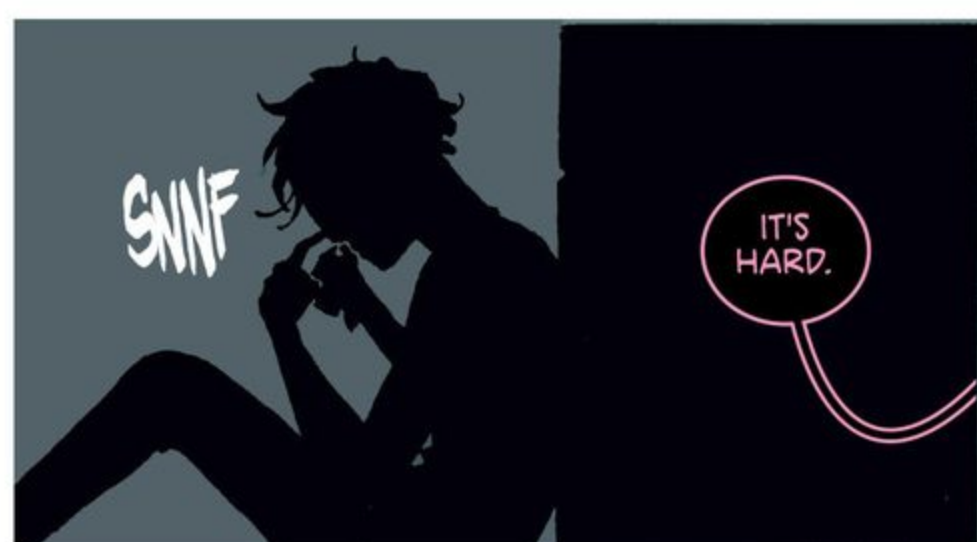
CAN'T TRUST ANYONE.

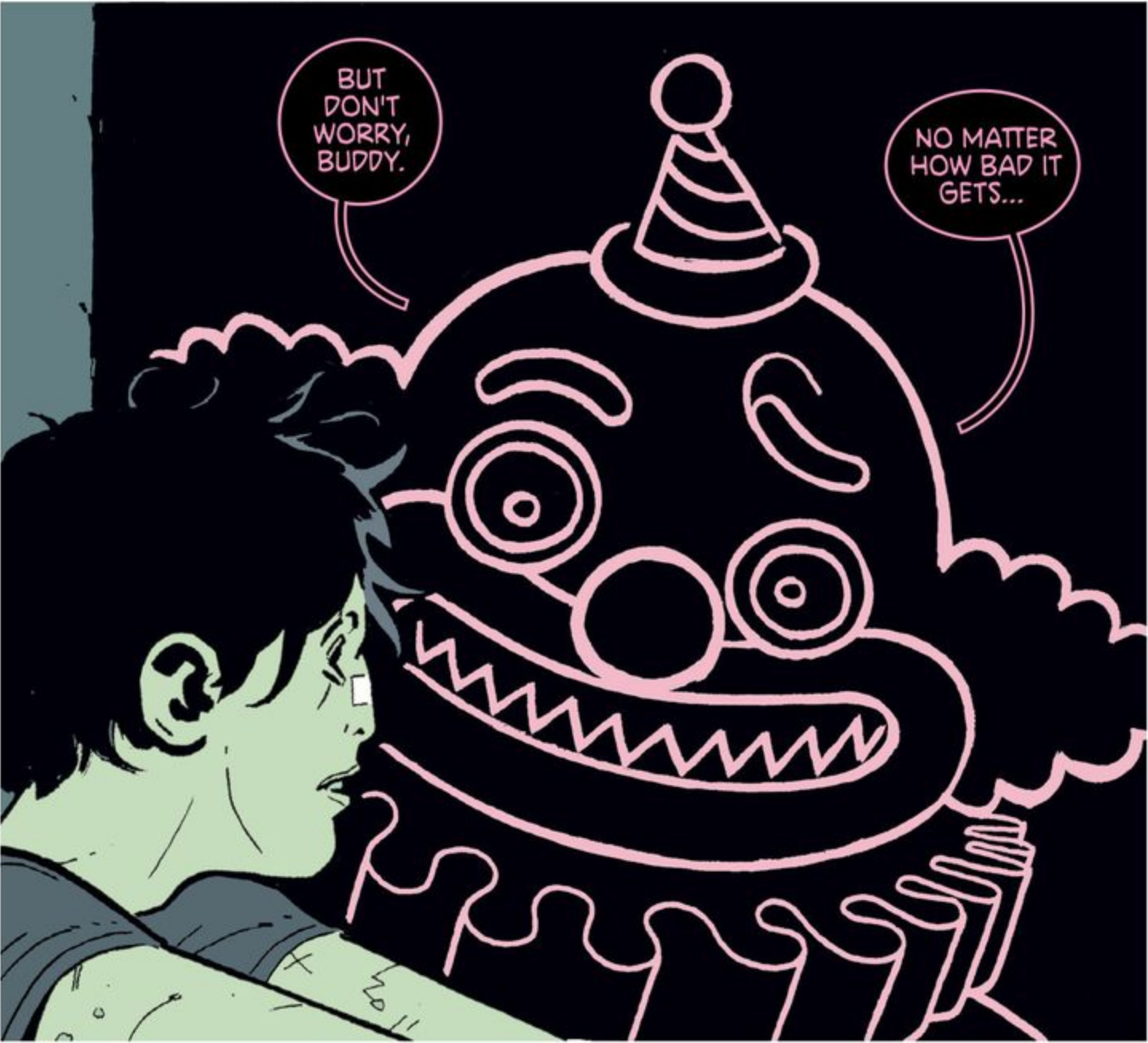
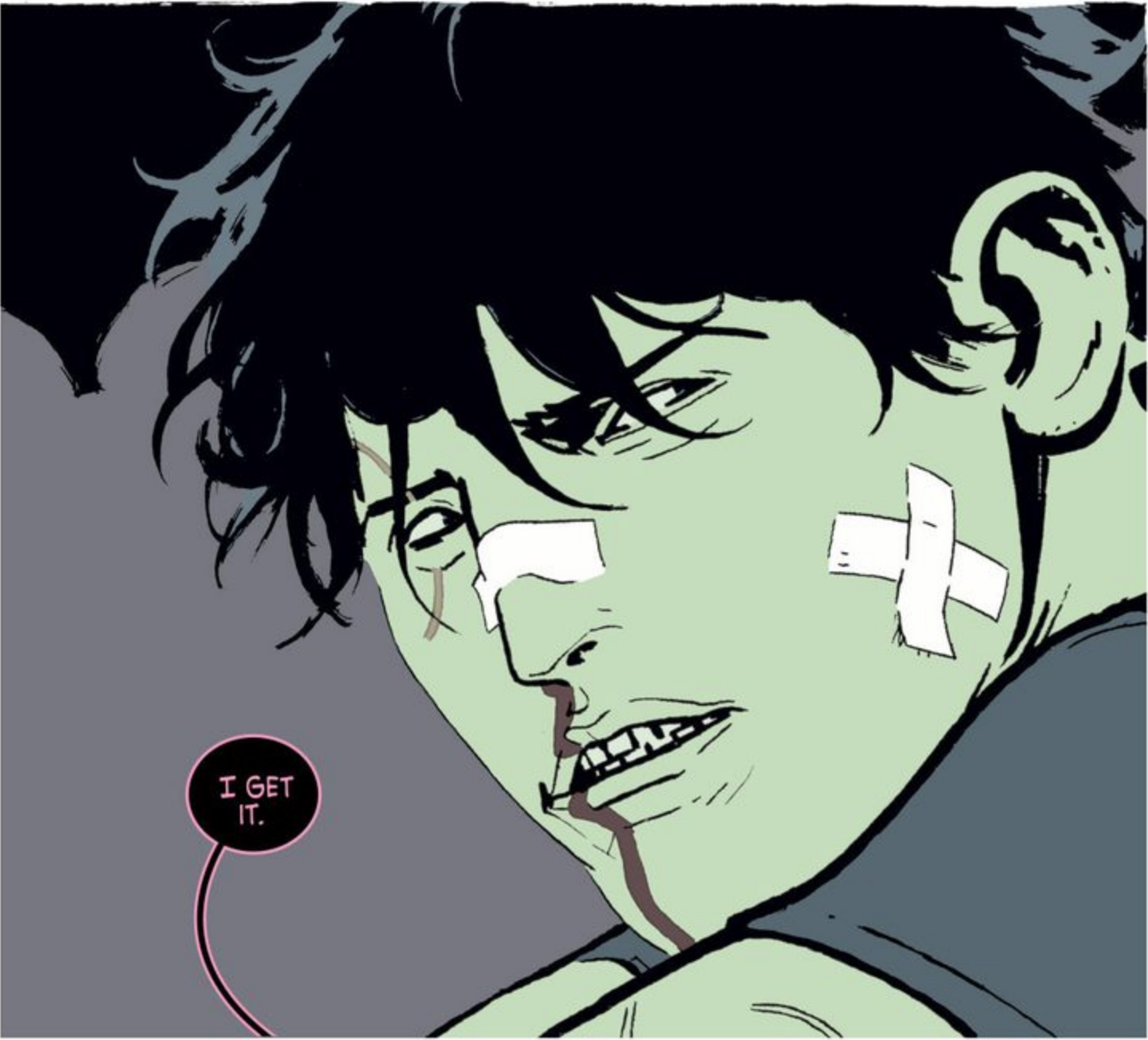














DEADLY CLASSES

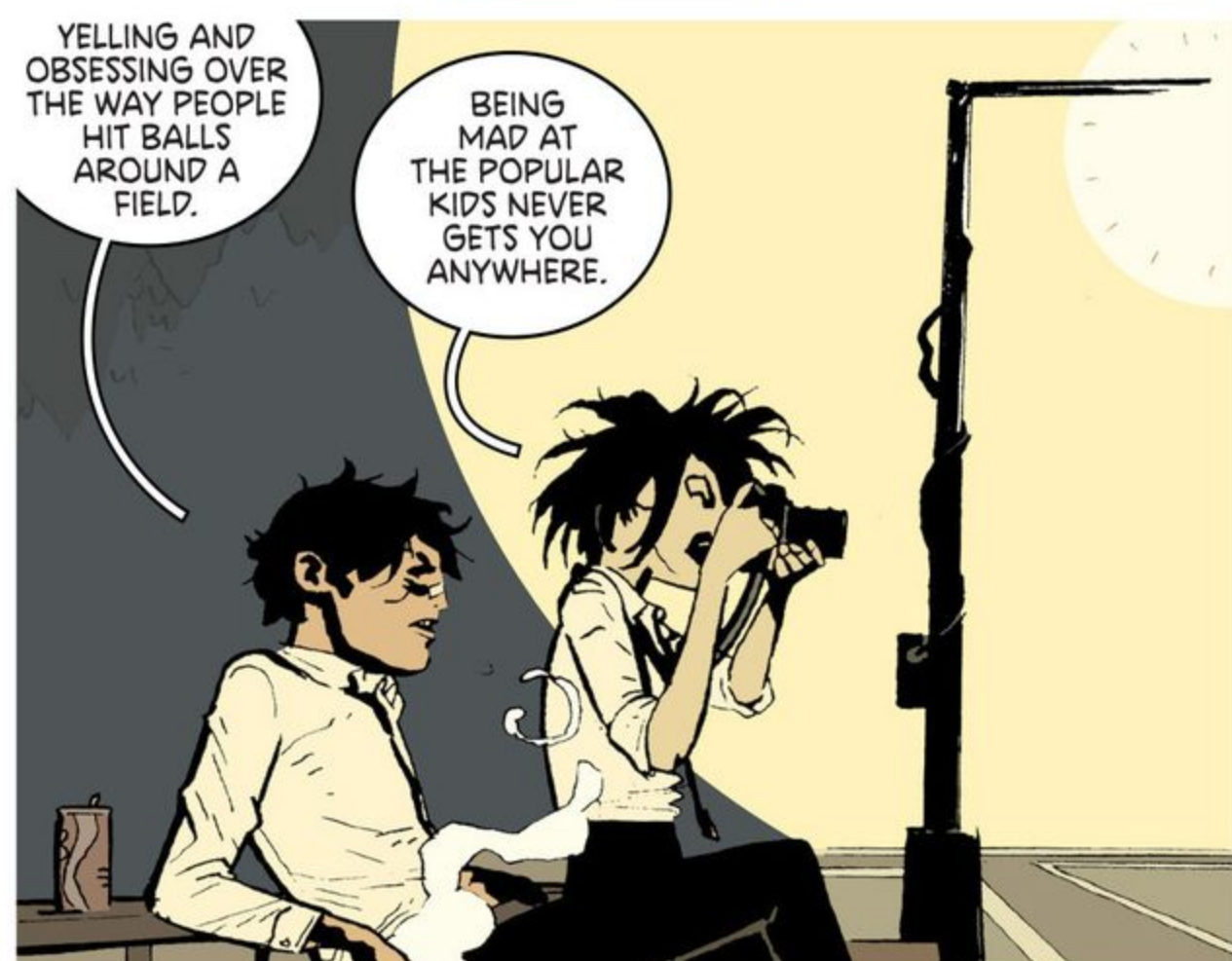
RICK REMENDER WES CRAIG
writer-co-creators-artist

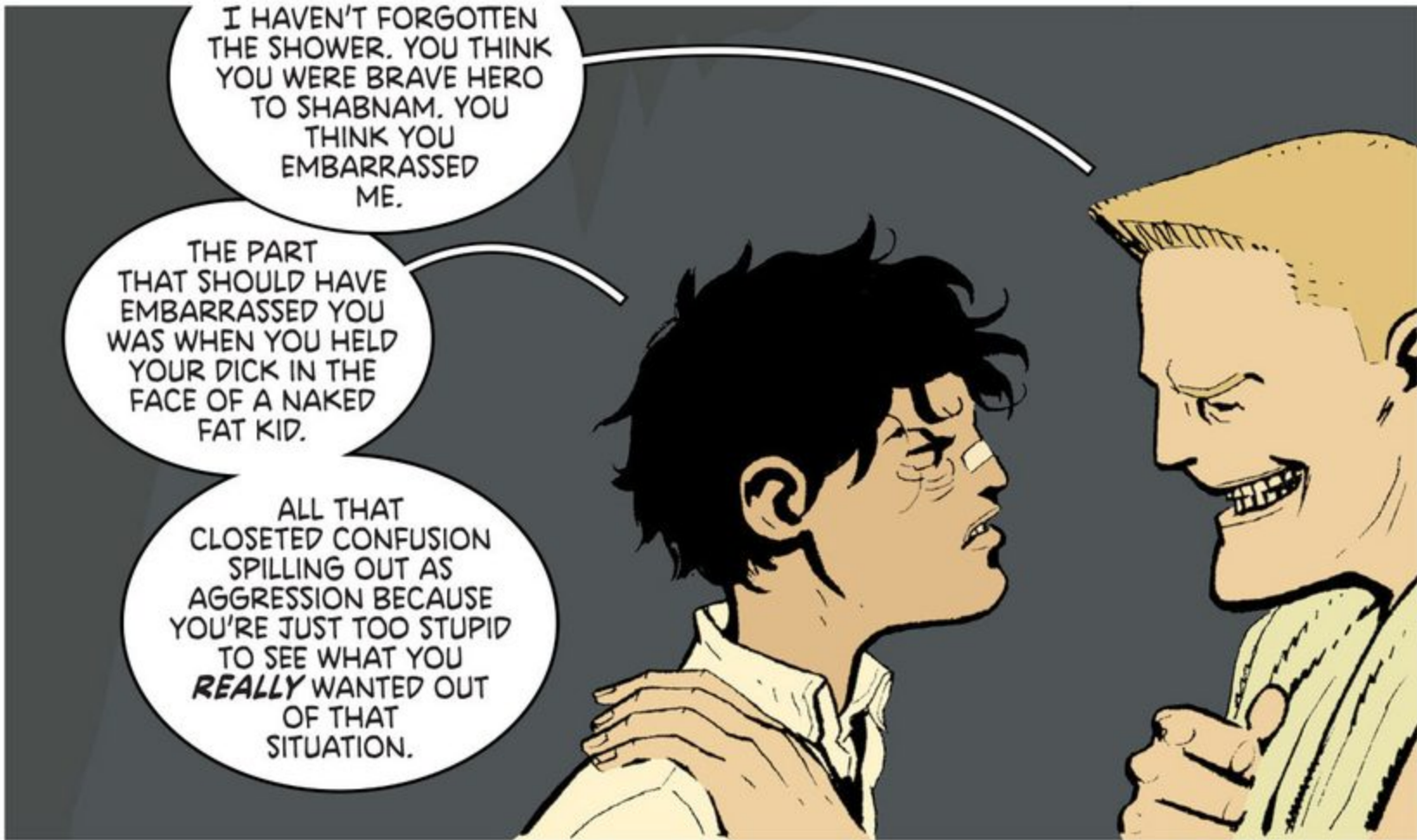
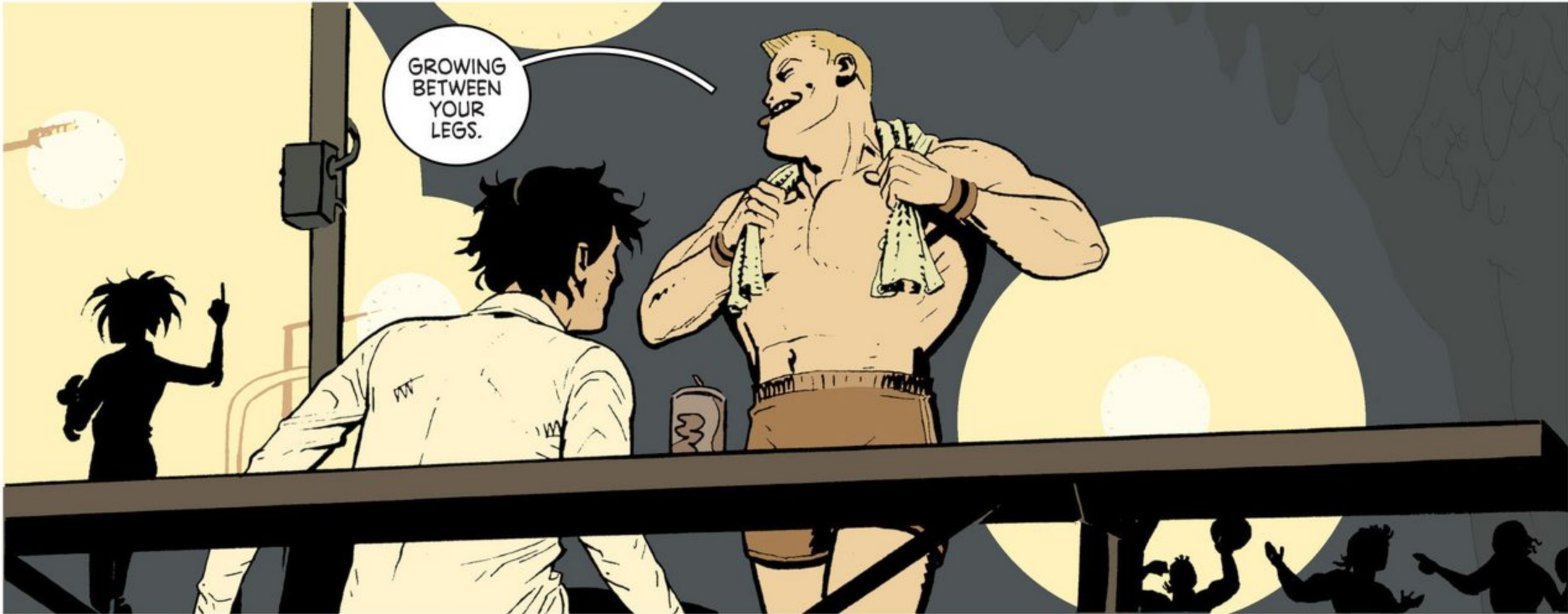
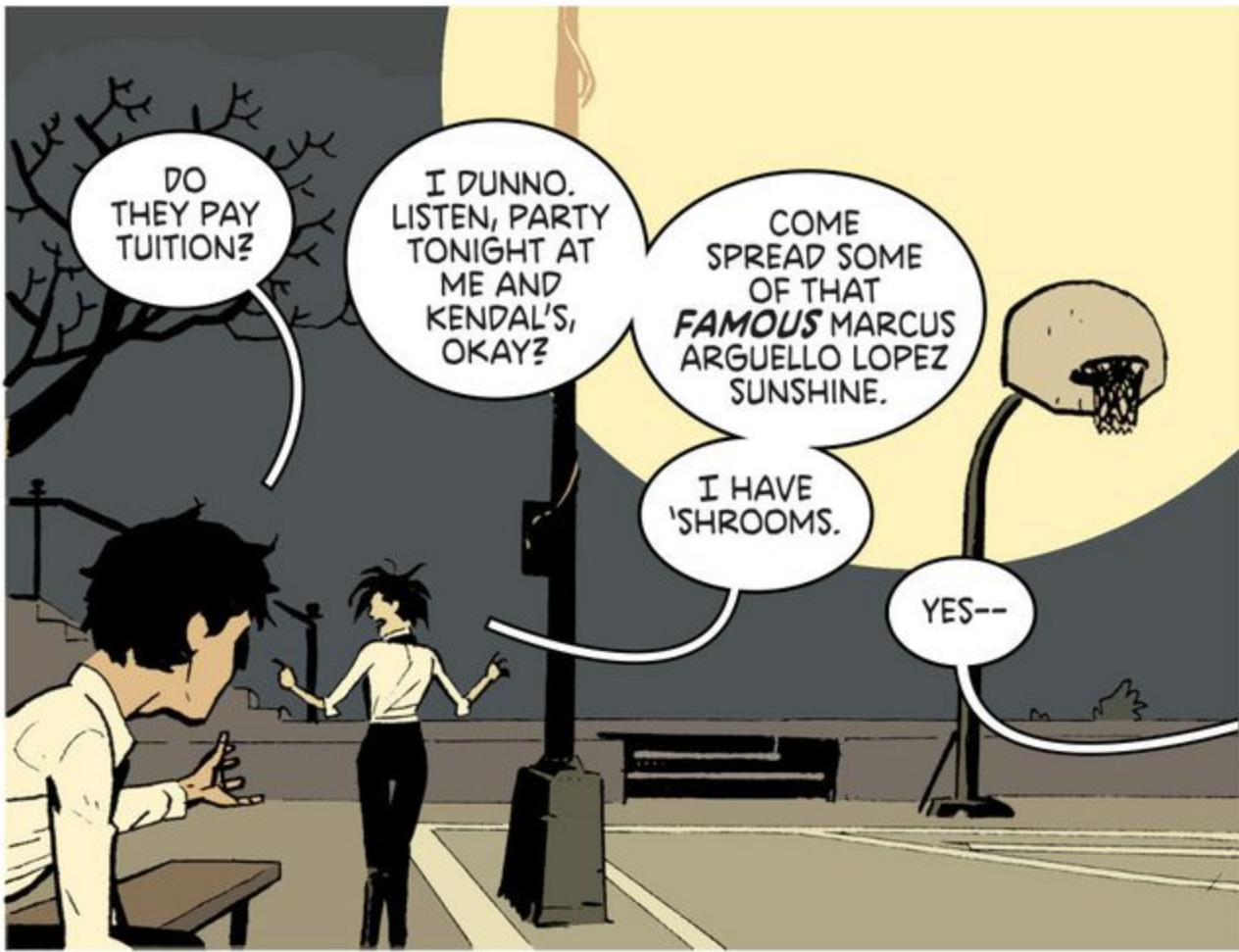
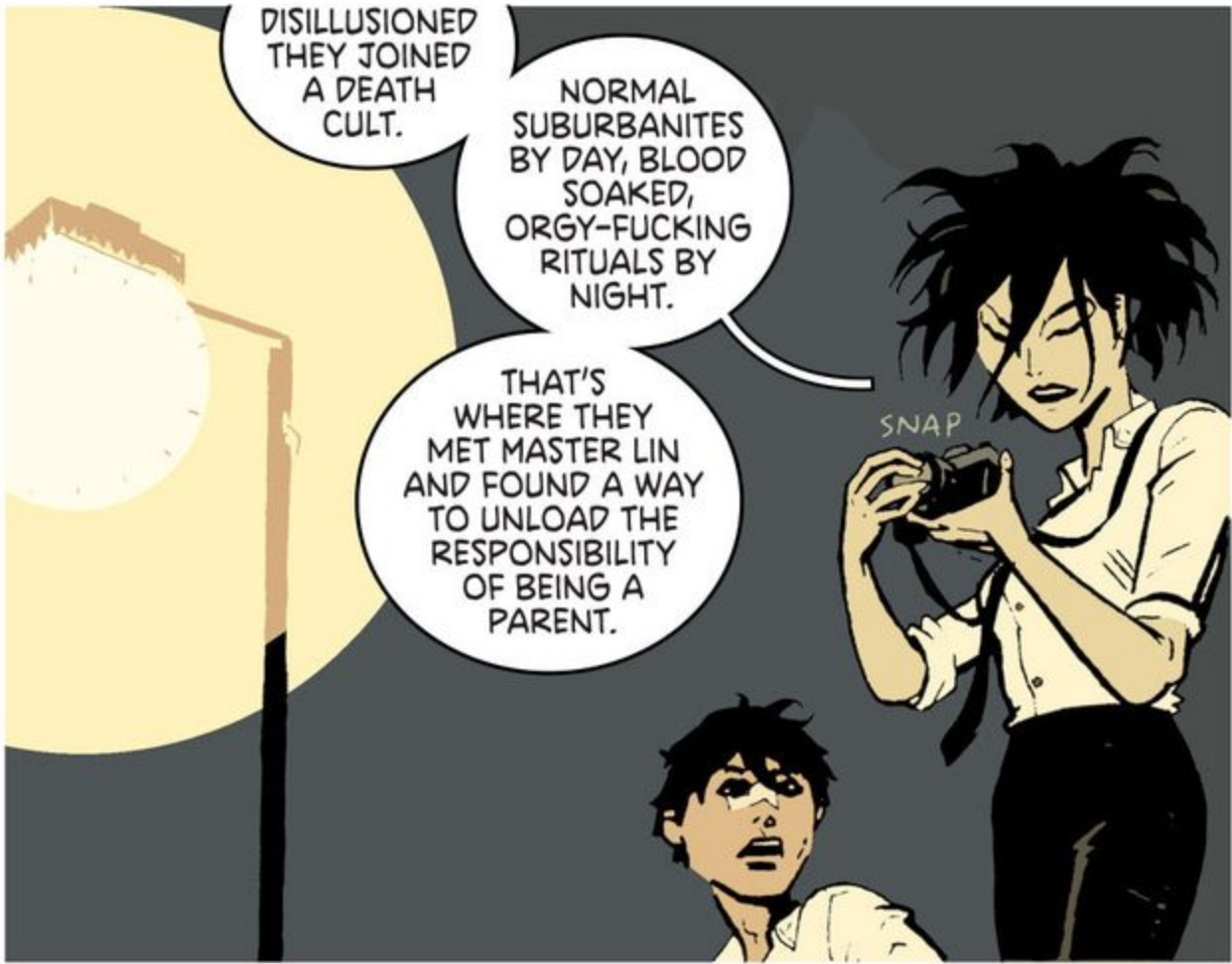
JORDAN BOYD
colorist

RUS WOOTON
letterer

SEBASTIAN GIRNER
editor











LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED! KICK OUT THE JAMS!

THAT'S A LOT OF MUSHROOMS, MARCUS.

GOOD.



YOU FEEL ANYTHING YET?

NO.

MAYBE.

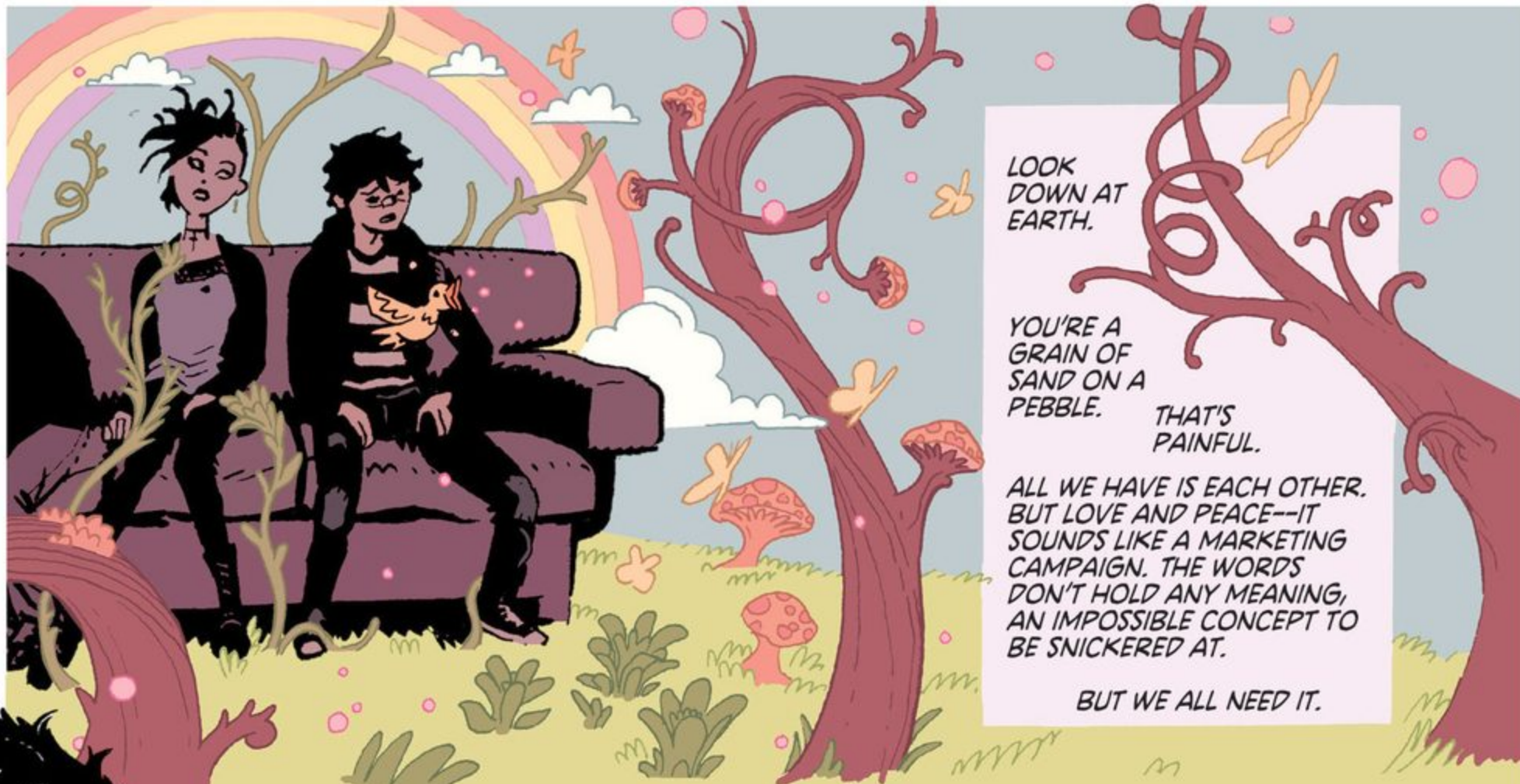
MY HANDS ARE CLAMMY.

LOOK DOWN AT YOURSELF FROM SPACE.

YOU HIDE FROM THE LIFE SOME OTHER, SOME BETTER, VERSION OF YOURSELF IS LEADING.

BUT YOU'VE CHOSEN THIS ONE.

STEP-BY-STEP YOU'VE CREATED "YOU."



LOOK DOWN AT EARTH.

YOU'RE A GRAIN OF SAND ON A PEBBLE.

THAT'S PAINFUL.

ALL WE HAVE IS EACH OTHER. BUT LOVE AND PEACE--IT SOUNDS LIKE A MARKETING CAMPAIGN. THE WORDS DON'T HOLD ANY MEANING, AN IMPOSSIBLE CONCEPT TO BE SNICKERED AT.

BUT WE ALL NEED IT.



WE ALL NEED A WORLD WORKING TOGETHER FOR ONE COMMON GOAL.

WE NEED LOVE AND KINDNESS. BUT WE LAUGH AT IT. THIS THING WE'RE ALL STARVING FOR BECOMES A LARK.

BALLS TO THE WALL.

WE RIDICULE IT BECAUSE WE KNOW WE CAN'T HAVE IT. NOT IN THIS WORLD.

BUT I REMEMBER IT. I'M A LITTLE BOY, MOM BLOWING RASPBERRIES ON MY STOMACH. HER SMILE. THE WARM LIGHT AND THE LONG HUGS.

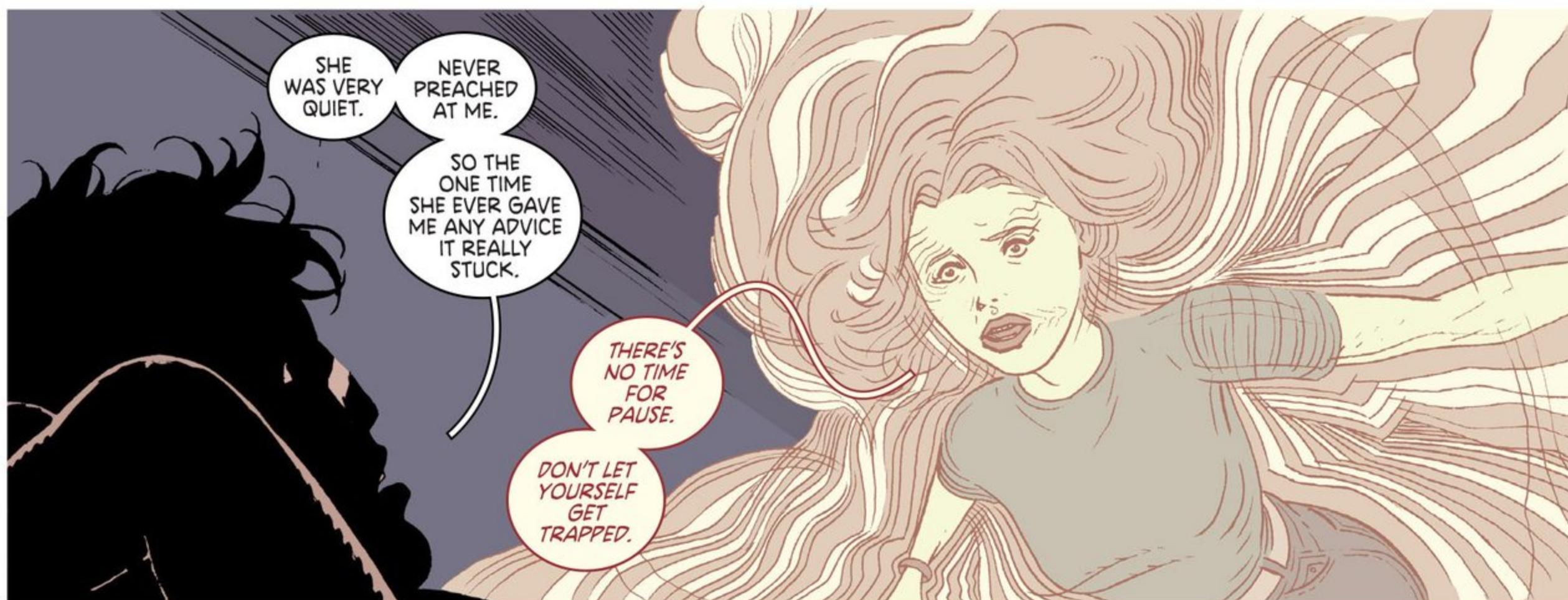
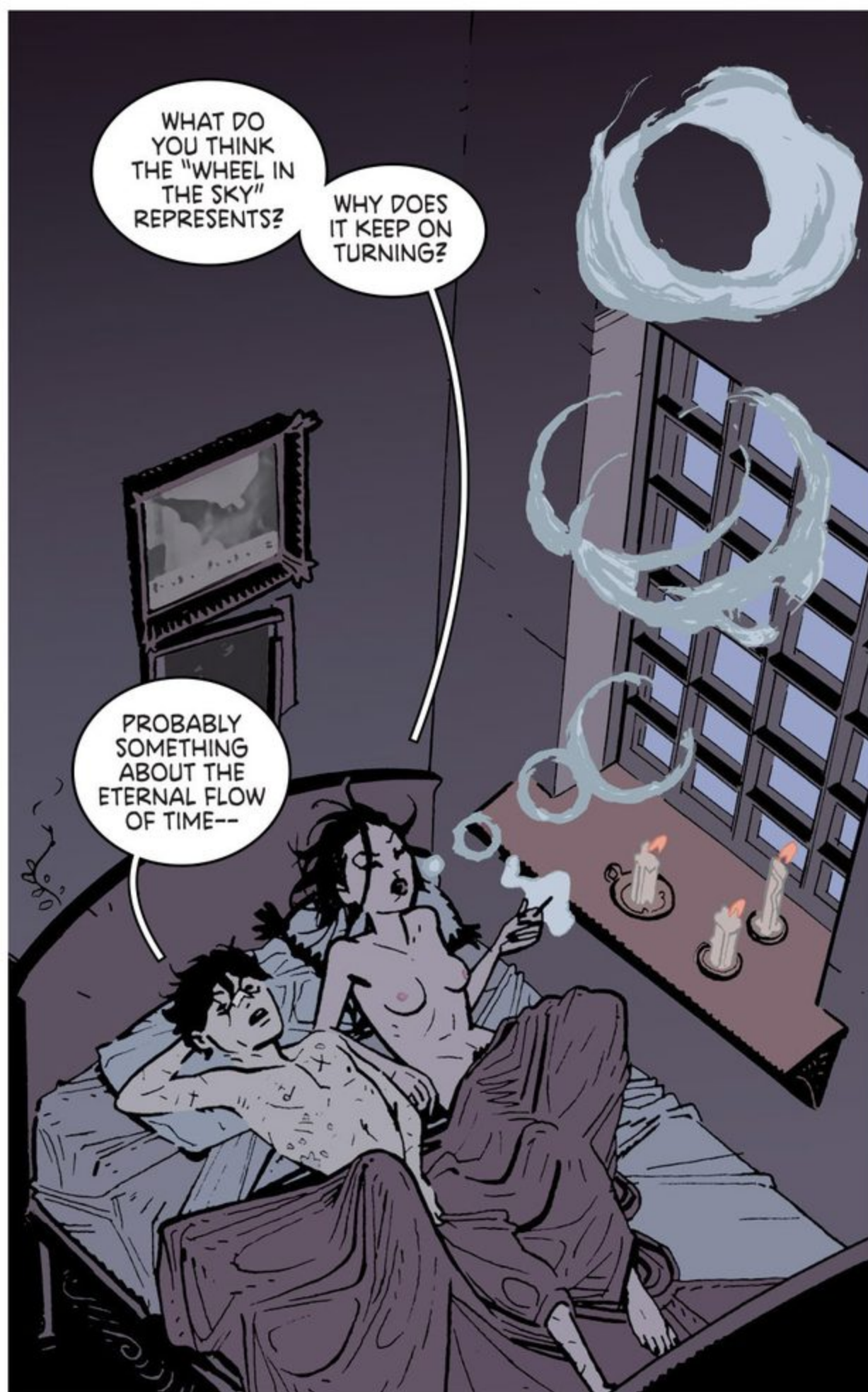
IT PERMEATED ME.

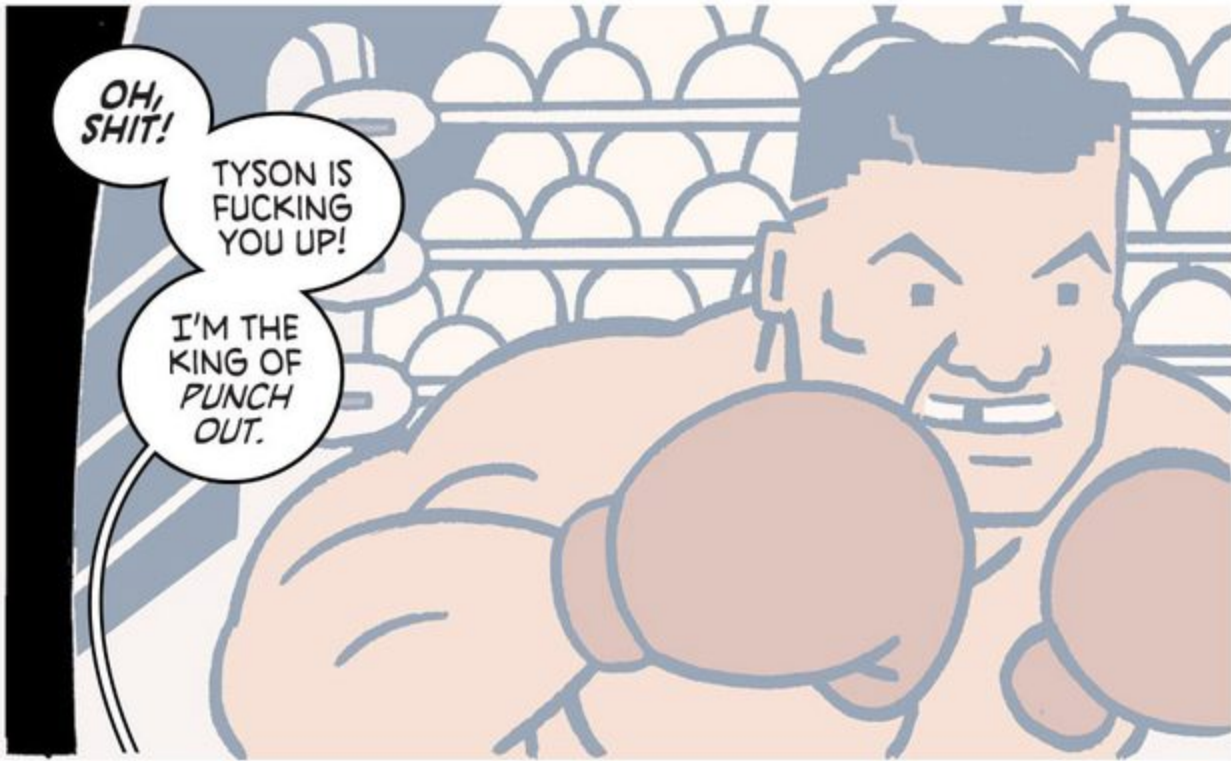
BUT THE MEMORY CAN ONLY SCRATCH WHAT IT WAS LIKE. THE MEMORY CAN'T GIVE ANY OF IT BACK--

THE INTENSITY IS GONE. IT'S ALL NUMBED OUT. THE WORLD TOOK IT. THE WORLD THAT CAN'T BELIEVE IN PEACE AND LOVE. THE WORLD THAT LEARNED BETTER WHEN IT TRIED. THE WORLD THAT TOOK MOM AWAY.





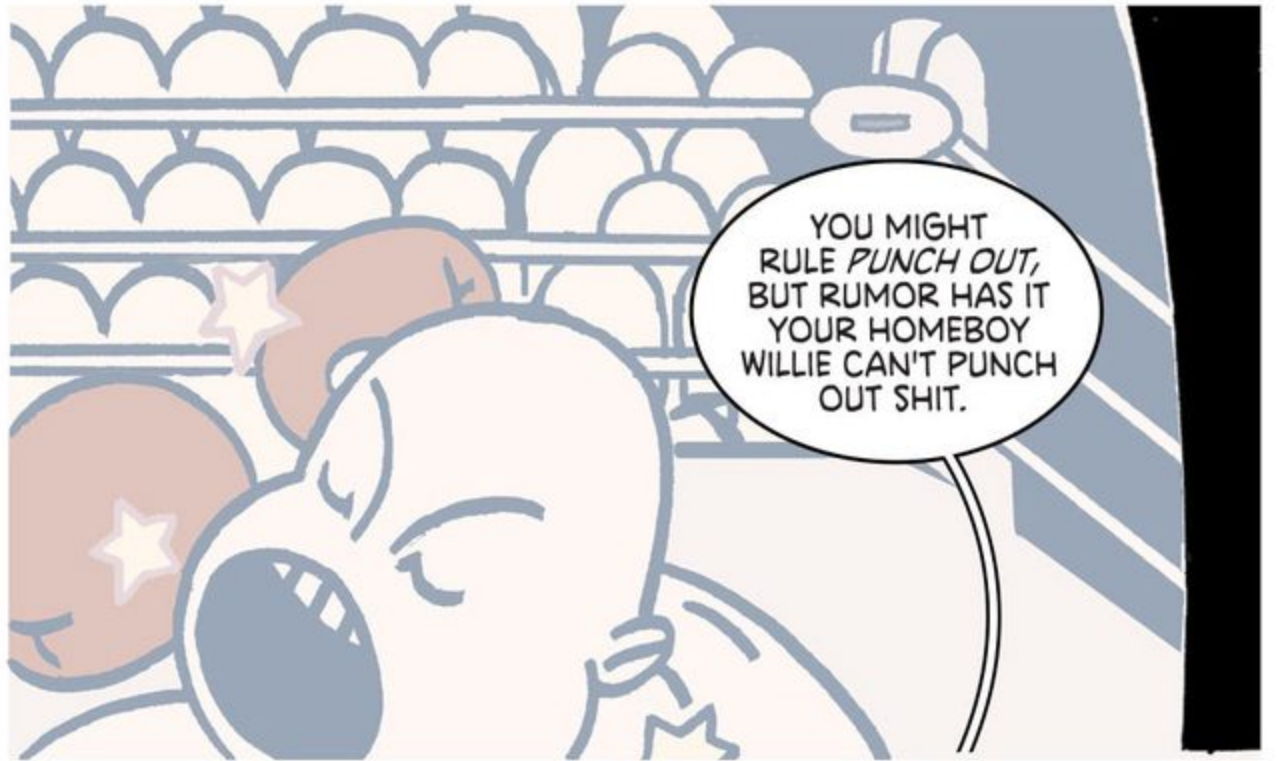




OH, SHIT!

TYSON IS
FUCKING
YOU UP!

I'M THE
KING OF
PUNCH
OUT.



YOU MIGHT
RULE *PUNCH OUT*,
BUT RUMOR HAS IT
YOUR HOMEBODY
WILLIE CAN'T PUNCH
OUT SHIT.



BULLSHIT.
WILLIE'S
HARDCORE.

WHO
YOU BEEN
TALKIN'
TO?

MARCUS.
USED TO BE HIS
BOY. HE WAS
YAMMERING
ABOUT IT ALL
NIGHT TRIPPING
BALLS.



WILLIE'S
A PUNK.
RIGHT,
MARCUS?



HE'S A LIAR--
HE NEVER
SHOT
ANYONE.



FUCK.



I
FUCKIN'
KNEW IT,
YO.

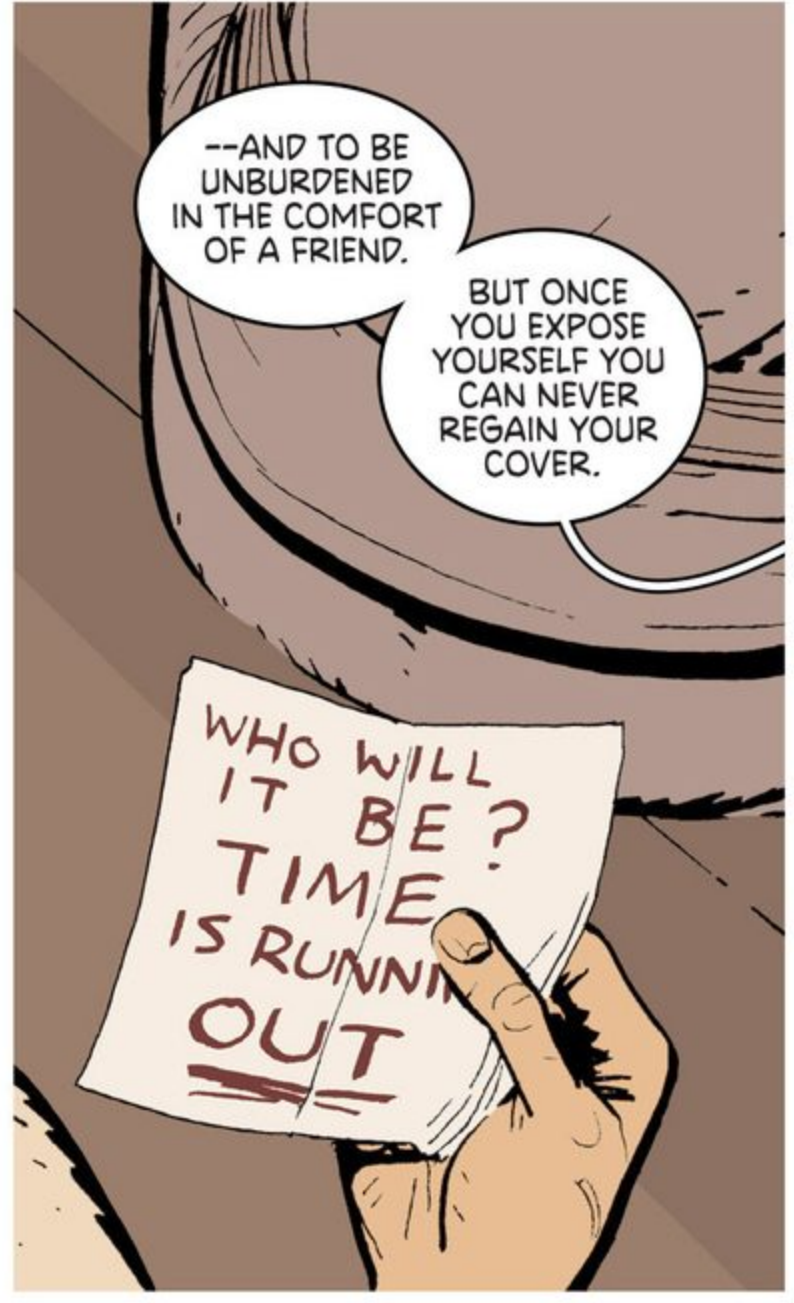
MOTHERFUCKIN'
LIAR BEST HAVE
SOME ANSWERS
FOR THIS, OR I'M
COMIN' BACK
FOR YOU!

JESUS.

WHAT DID I
JUST DO?









DEAD LETTER OFFICE

RR - And the good times continue to roll.

Before we get to the letters I would like to welcome Jordan Boyd as our new series colorist. I've been a big fan of Jordan's work for a long time and I am overjoyed he was able to join us in chronicling the lives of the most damaged teenagers ever. A round of applause for Lee Loughridge and his spectacular work on the series to date. Lee is one of the most sought after guys in comic books and we were lucky to have had him for as long as we did.

We have a ton of mail coming in so let's get to answers.

Rick,

I can sit here and send you a letter about which of your many comics I love and why, or I can instead thank you for your years of entertainment over at Marvel. Instead I would like to say thank you not for the stories, but for the inspiration. After reading strictly X-Men comics for almost 30 years and never really looking at who was writing them it was your first *Uncanny X-Force* arc that literally smashed me in the face and woke me up to a whole other facet of comics. That being said I have since, at 40 years old and a 20 year veteran, decided I legitimately hate doing I.T. work and have focused on making a writing career for myself. While I haven't quit my day job as of yet, I did submit a pitch earlier this year to Red Stylo Media for their 27 graphic novel anthology and fucking NAILED IT. That book is now coming out in October, and my story is one of the Top 4 (Jimi Hendrix). I've been submitting to anyone that will read my ramblings as well, with Top Cow and Oni Press's open submissions being some obvious choices.

Anyway, your letter at the end of DEADLY CLASS reminded me I needed to write this and say something to you. You kill dude and as I work my way into this industry with baby steps I hope to one day shake your hand and thank you in person and then fanboy all over the floor.

Thanks Dude!
RJ Marchese

RR - thanks for taking the time to write in. A career in comics takes a lot of time and energy, but then the books come together and nothing can quite touch it. Making creator-owned comic books is the purest form of creation I've discovered. The final result is as close to initial intention as anything

I've worked on. I wish you the best of luck in achieving your goals.

Rick,

I just finished reading your essay in the back of DEADLY CLASS #14. I had to come back to it. The realism of this issue really brought me down. I'm just about to bring myself to reread it, but first I wanted to write to you: Your essay inspires me, and I believe in you. I just finished my Jazz Studies degree, but that doesn't open up jobs in my immediate future. I have to take less desirable gigs. And eventually I may even have to take a full on pop gig *sigh*.

But I'm working hardest at what feeds me. My music makes me go. If I keep sight of what is important everything else lines up. It's gratifying when people enjoy hearing you play your own music more than your interpretations of someone else's work. We all have to do what it takes to survive in the end, but there is no price I wouldn't pay to make my art.

Thank you for making your art to inspire my art.

Jacob Bigus

RR - I couldn't agree more. It's really nice to hear other people respond this way. Your music analogy is perfect. Writing and playing your own music will always be more satisfying. Singing your own songs and expressing your perspective on life and the world we live in will always be more fulfilling than doing cover songs.

Hello there Mr. Remender! Just read your excerpt after DEADLY CLASS 14 and (minus the family health issues, if that is an immediate concern. Power to you and your family!) It excites me to hear that you're leaving Marvel. I first got into comics during the first (of many it seems) re-launches that Marvel did when you started writing *Uncanny Avengers* and read a buddies *Uncanny X-Force*. Been a fan of yours ever since! Although Marvel in there many "Marvel Now!" and "All New #1!!!" and "All New Marvel Now .1" just irked me beyond repair, so I dropped all superhero titles. Luckily for me you were just starting to throw some really awesome material on my plate and I've been happily hungry for everything through Image you've been giving to the world. Black Science is beautiful, DEADLY CLASS is a rebellious pleasure, Low is a high, and I'm suuuuper pumped for *Tokyo Ghost*

with Sean Murphy. You got yourself one hell of a creative team(s) and by the sounds of it; you couldn't be in better hands.

Long live Image for the choice and availability to do what you love. Keep up the greatness in every aspect!

With love from the Canadian north of Alberta,
Sean Underwood

RR - Thanks for the support. More than anything it's people like you who enable us to make these kinds of comic books.

Issue #14 really hit home for me personally, as I'm sure it did for many other people.

I don't know if this is true, but I'm interpreting the story as more so an argument that Marcus' group are all fucked up, and they deserve the consequences by virtue of existing as themselves. As opposed to Petra who argues against accepting human propensities of behavior.

If anything, Lex seems to be the most tragic character, seeing how he was an outsider, and he got railroaded due the group's love triangle.

I'm guessing Marcus is gonna try to kill Saya.

Can't wait for the next issue.

P.S. Will the narrative of DEADLY CLASS ever transition to a place where Marcus isn't haunted by his past?

Antwon K.

RR - We are entering the end of the first major story and everything is going to be turned upside down after issue 16. All of the kids in the school have had to adapt to terrible circumstances and do terrible things in order to fit in. None of them are entirely innocent. That fact coupled with a teenager's propensity for making bad/emotional decisions will end in tragedy for many of them. After the events of this issue do you think Marcus going to try and kill Saya or is Saya going to try and kill Marcus?

I've written before--and I'm doing it again---this is my favorite book, so thank you Wes & Rick for creating it and killing it every single issue.

There's a panel at the bottom of page 2, it's Marcus falling through the air with blood all over his face. This image really struck me for some reason---I think in a way it sort of sums up Marcus for me a little. He's never really in control, just in motion until the next thing hits---which accounts for the always-bloody face too. I'm wondering where he's at (head space) in #13; I also await the issue where Saya and Maria both kick his fickle butt.

Speaking of the ladies, before #12, I'd have told you that I was diehard #Team-Saya, but now---especially after #13, Maria is really stealing me over. At first, I'm not even sure what it was about Maria I didn't like---maybe the crying---and then there was Saya, tough and stoic, but gentle too. Now, though, while I still like Saya for those same reasons, I'm seeing Maria a lot differently. I think I mistook her emotional reactions (tears & freakouts) the wrong way---and not even that she wasn't justified in them, at the time I just wanted her to be more, well, like Saya. She's not though---she's not overreacting, or over-emotional, she's passionate. Passionate in every action and reaction---and I am really, really loving that about her. I want to know her better now.

The fight scene with the priest-henchman dude was stunning. I love those damn fans. I really hope Professor stab-you-in-the-back gets it handed to him----what a jerk.

Can't wait to see where this is going.
Summer

RR – Don't feel bad, Summer. We had to plan the story to misdirect our readers on Maria a little bit. The idea was to make you see her the way Marcus did, without really knowing the true reasons for all of her emotional problems.

As the story progressed and we revealed more about her inner life it made Maria much more relatable. Just in time for her terrible fate in issue 13. As we developed this book, Maria became one of my favorites. So, following through with the initial plan for her fate was difficult for me. But that's just the beginning of the terrible things we have in store for the cast.

Deadly Class Team,

I just finished reading issue #10 and when Marcus shits himself, I laughed so hard I cried. When my boyfriend saw me

laughing at your comic, he said how much he loves me. Little did he know I was laughing at poop jokes! Anyway, you guys have made something amazing here and I love every page of it. I look forward to finding out more about the characters you've created.

Sincerely,
Bonnie Winn

RR - A good poop joke used for comic relief in a dour and serious story can be pretty cathartic. I'm a big fan of using potty humor to lighten things up. A fart joke can go a pretty long way when it's done right. Who wants to take everything so seriously all the time? Glad you got a laugh out of it. It may or may not have been something that actually happened to me.

I know you're balls deep in Comic Con but I had to drop a line.

First off, I love your book(s). DEADLY CLASS, *Low*, *Black Science*. Great, great shit.

However, what I really want to applaud you for are your comments regarding your decision to focus on your creator-owned work. I can't wait to see what becomes of your craft when you're free to give it your complete focus.

Joe
Denver, Co.

RR - Thanks, Joe!

I don't know where I would fit in in the scheme of the DEADLY CLASS demographics. I haven't been a teen for a loooooong time, and I am a few years older than you.

I also moved around some as a kid, though not as much as you. My growing up was not nearly as "interesting" I guess we could say. Comfortable middle class all the way.

So I can't really say I relate to the kids in DEADLY CLASS in any meaningful way. At this point, having outgrown super heroes, I just want a well-told story, and DEADLY CLASS is that.

As an art teacher, I have been waiting for summer so I could re read all of *Zero*, *Black Science*, and DEADLY CLASS. *Zero* and *Black Science* so I can try and make sense of them and DEADLY CLASS just to review.

Having just finished 1-13, the first thing

I notice is how little has actually happened. Lots of character building, very well done, lots of cool action, but overall, we have just finished Marcus' origin haven't we?

But really I'm writing to say.... HOLY BALLS!!!!!! Did you just fucking kill Maria!?!?! Jesus Christ!!!! What the fuck, man!?!?

Well. Really can't wait to we where we go from here.

Keep up the good work.

John Mosher
Kansas City

RR - character building is one of the things I find most enjoyable. And I wanted to allow myself to do a lot of it in this series. To temper my urge to keep things moving and action-packed, to slow down, and to zoom in on each one of the characters as much as possible. And that's not something I'm going to be changing anytime soon. The trick is to find a way to do the character building while still keeping the events of the plot popping and the pages turning. It's nice to hear when people think we've succeeded.

Rick,

I'm loving your story thus far. You've got the perfect team on this project. Color, writing, illustrations and panel layout are off the charts. I have but one critique and request and it is that you would BRING BACK WES CRAIG'S PROCESS for the singles. Other than that you all do epic work together. Keep at it.

Aspiring artist,

Jonathan X

RR - Ask and you shall receive, Jonathan. We will begin running Wes's process pages again starting in this issue just for you.

That's it for now. See you next month for issue 16 and the end of the first major story arc. I don't think you'll believe what we have planned, and I don't want to sit here and spit hyperbole at you, but it's going to be a shocker. The kind of issue that has me very excited as it is the culmination of everything we've been doing to date.

See you in 30,
Rick

TRANSMISSIONS FROM A BASEMENT

Most everything I know about the comic industry came from my time managing a comic book shop in the early '90s.

For the first few months on the job I kept my opinions to myself, rang people up, pointed them towards what they were after. I silently judged them, naturally, as is the god given prerogative of all shop clerks, but I left them alone. One day the owner of the shop, Blake Shira, my nerd mentor, told me he felt it was our duty to help people find top quality comics, not to focus on making a bundle of cash today, but to build a customer base for life. His idea was to hook people on great stories and art over merely collecting “hot” comics. He wanted us to help customers find new books to read and become passionate about.

As many of you know, in the early '90s there was a shift, it seemed to begin with the “Death” of Superman, but suddenly people were almost entirely focused on the value of their comics as collectibles over the substance of the art within. It drove Blake nuts. He was a true iconoclast, a humanist, a former promoter of punk shows in the early '80s and the kind of person I gravitated towards due to my own philosophical leanings and immersion in the counterculture of the era. Blake was right, what was happening in comics was a crime. People collecting comic books like trading cards, looking to turn a profit.

Blake foresaw all the trouble this would lead to and so instructed me to focus on pushing good books that I enjoyed reading and could endorse over the flavor of the hour. To this end, I made a display once a month, a big one. I ordered piles of copies of my favorite books, drew a giant image of my favorite characters, hung lights over it and set it up in the shop window. And it worked.

The first I remember doing this for was *Hard Boiled* by Miller and Darrow, then *Eightball* by Dan Clowes and on and on. Each month I'd set up a display and when someone came in to buy a bundle of “collectable” comics I'd go into my sales pitch on why they should read our comic of the month instead. I did this for dozens of books over the few years I worked there and I built a loyal customer base of readers who saw the value in comics that were better read than collected.

The industry cracked in half a couple of years later. Hordes of speculators who'd bought all those millions of copies of shiny chromium comics came to sell them back and learned they were worthless. But our customer base was still there. The people who loved the comics for the entertainment value, for the art, for the stories, they didn't leave with all the rest.

I was thinking about this the other day as I was concocting ways to connect with retailers who enjoy our books and I remembered Blake's idea. So, I wanted to attempt to reach out and see if such humans might be interested in doing similar displays. And to sweeten the pot we're having a super hot sexy-time contest to reward the best in-store display of our creator-owned comics. Here's how it will work:

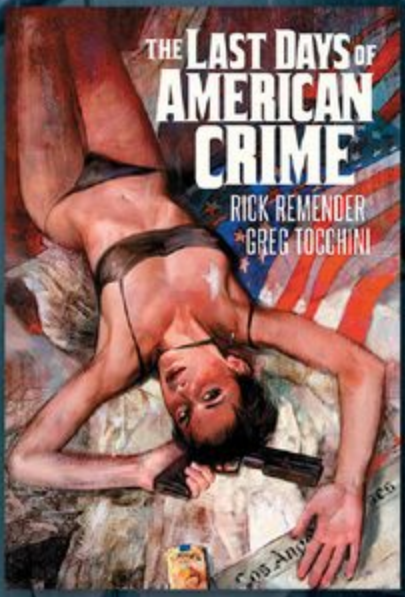
Create a display in your shop highlighting *Black Science*, *LOW*, *Deadly Class*, *Fear Agent*, *Strange Girl*, *Last Days of American Crime*, *Crawl Space*, and any other creator-owned books we've cooked up, and send us a picture. We'll run all the pictures in future issues, spotlighting your store. Each store that participates will receive a bundle of signed books and the display we like best will receive an original page of art from *LOW*, *Black Science*, and *Deadly Class*. And a virtual hug followed by virtual heavy petting. Followed by virtual marriage, virtual kids, virtual divorce, and ultimately an ugly virtual custody battle, after which we'll make up and be virtual friends again. For the virtual kids' sake.

Is this idea self-serving? For sure, and obviously only something you might do if you really like our books and want to help them find new readers. We are building these books for the long haul. We aren't going anywhere and we want to find a way to direct people to the series while promoting the shops that help. Like one big hippie-dippy commune of hugs and crunchy grooves.

Send your photos to WriteRemender@gmail.com along with the name, address and a few lines about your shop. No dick pics unless they are really “must see” levels of impressive or that's where you tattooed one of our characters.

Okay. So, in other news this month Image is releasing the oversized hardcover of *Last Days of American Crime*. This was the first book I did with Greg Tocchini -- way back in 2009 -- and something we are both incredibly proud of. The book is dark noir, an exercise in displaying human weakness and not for the light of heart. It shines a light on three irredeemable and desperate career criminals as they face the end of all crime in America via a broadcast that makes all illegal activity impossible. Greg spent nearly two years on the art of this book and you really have to see it in this oversized format to appreciate what he did. Together we set out to create the filthiest world we could imagine, inspired by James Ellroy and Philip K. Dick. Somehow Greg made all of that gut twisting unpleasantness beautiful.

TTFN,
Rick



LAST DAYS OF
AMERICAN CRIME
HARDCOVER



BLACK SCIENCE
ARTIST'S PROOF
EDITION



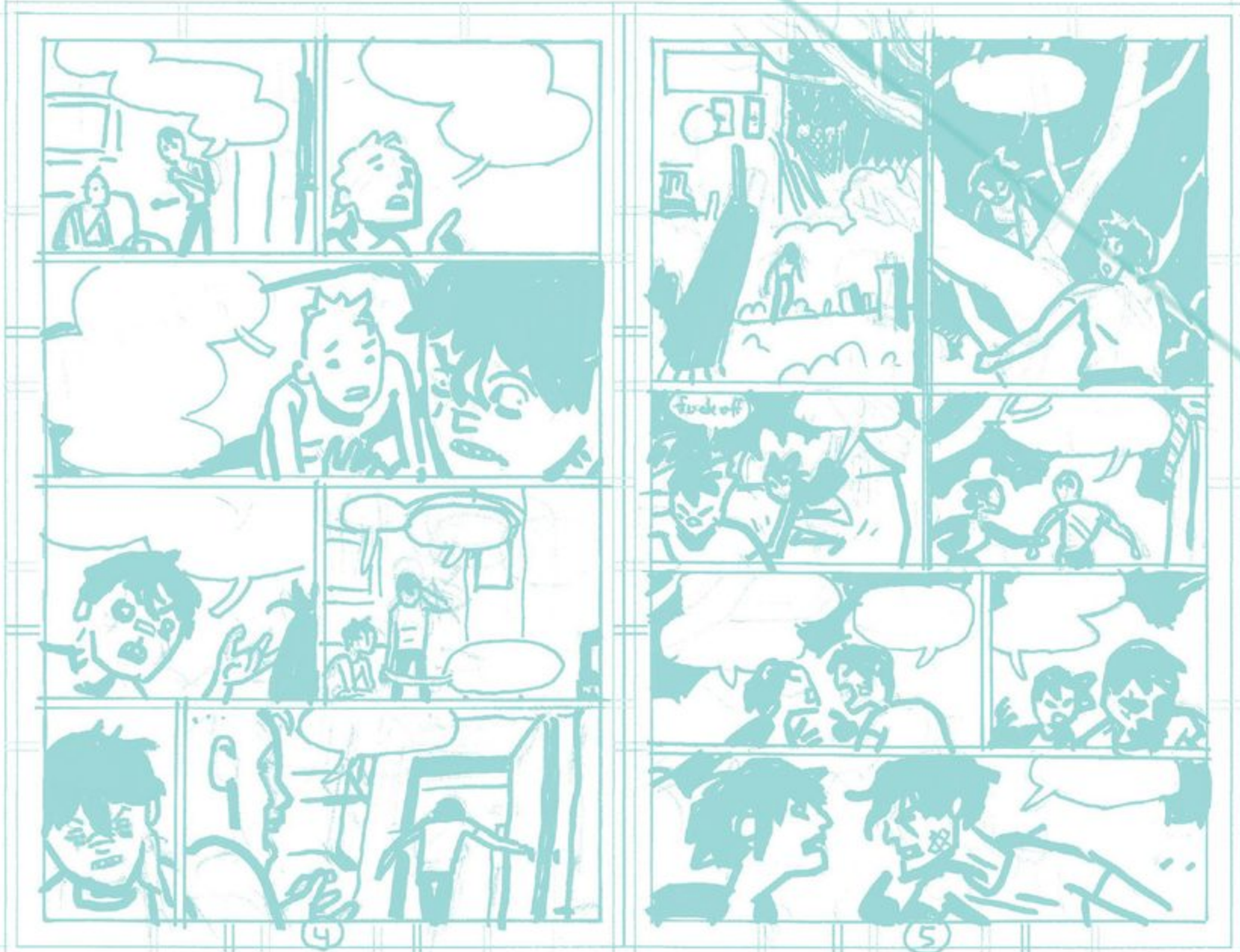
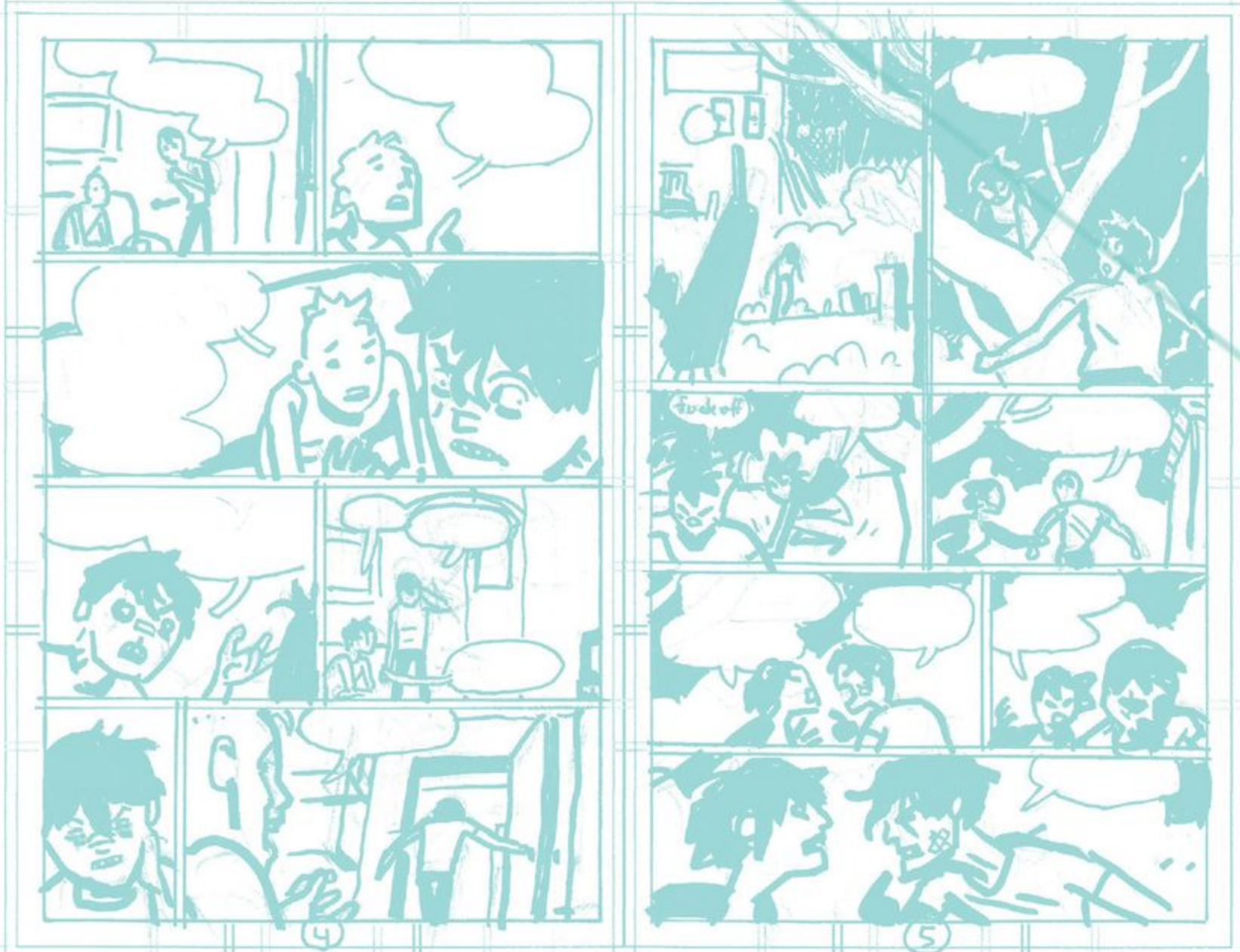
BLACK
SCIENCE #16

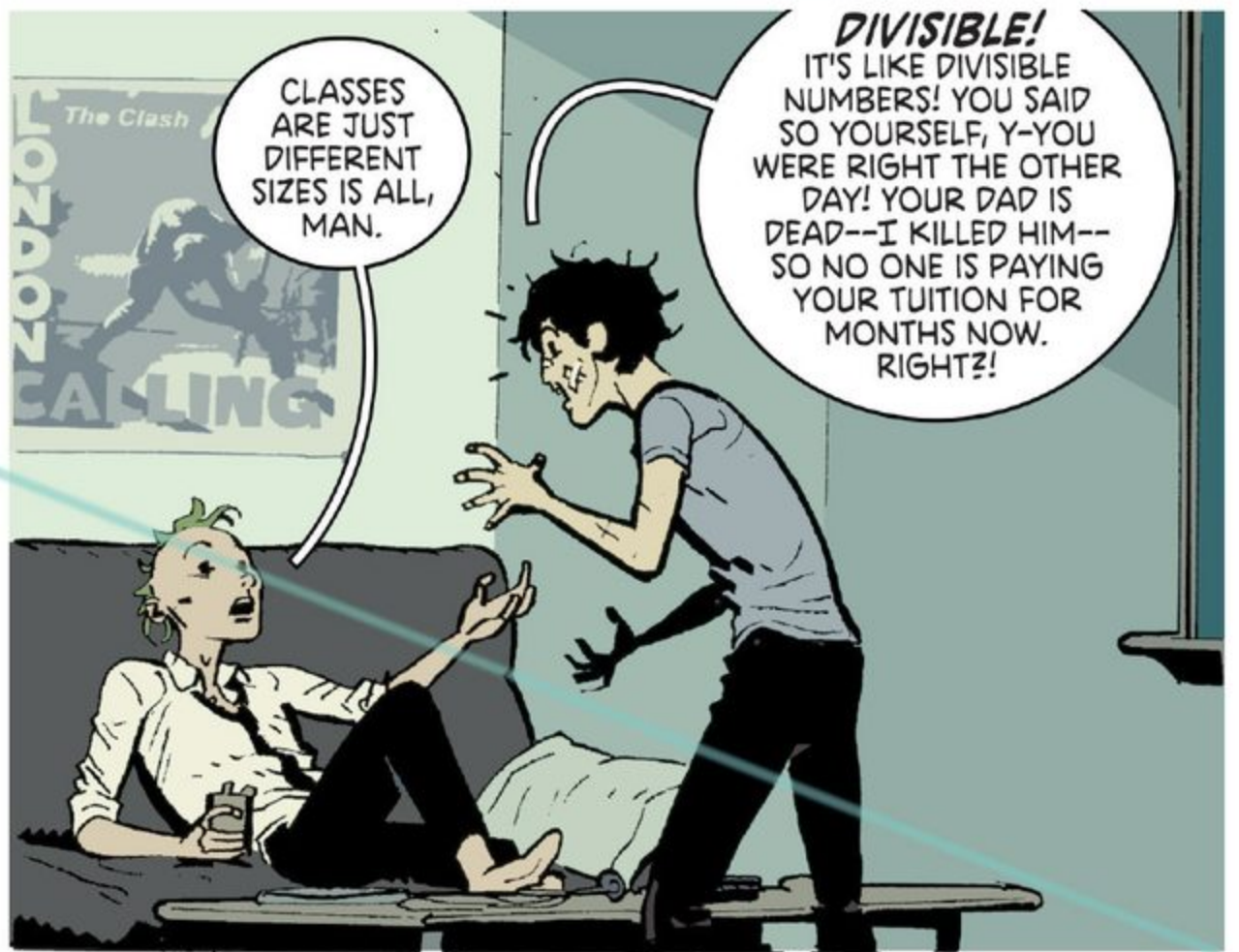
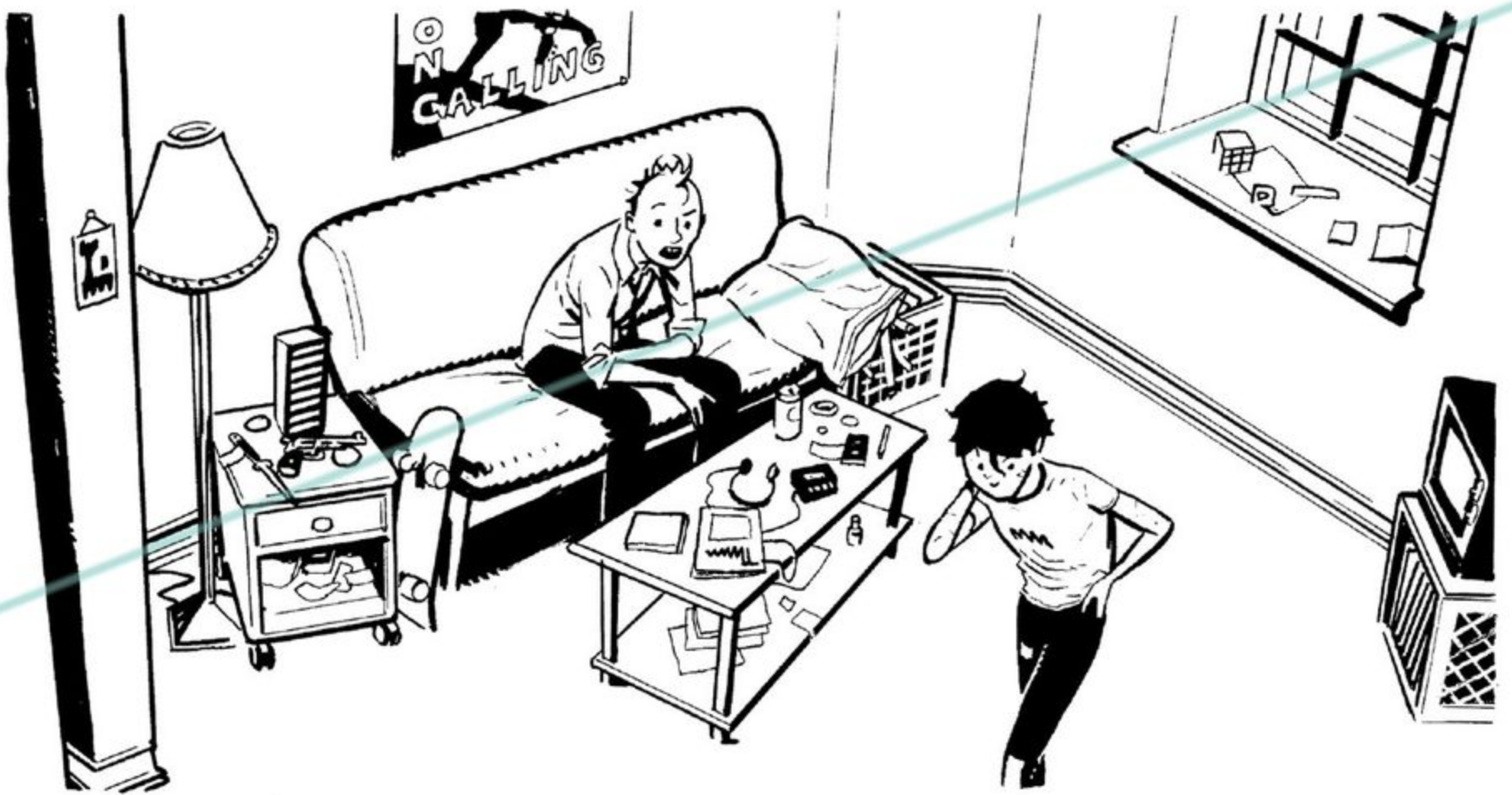
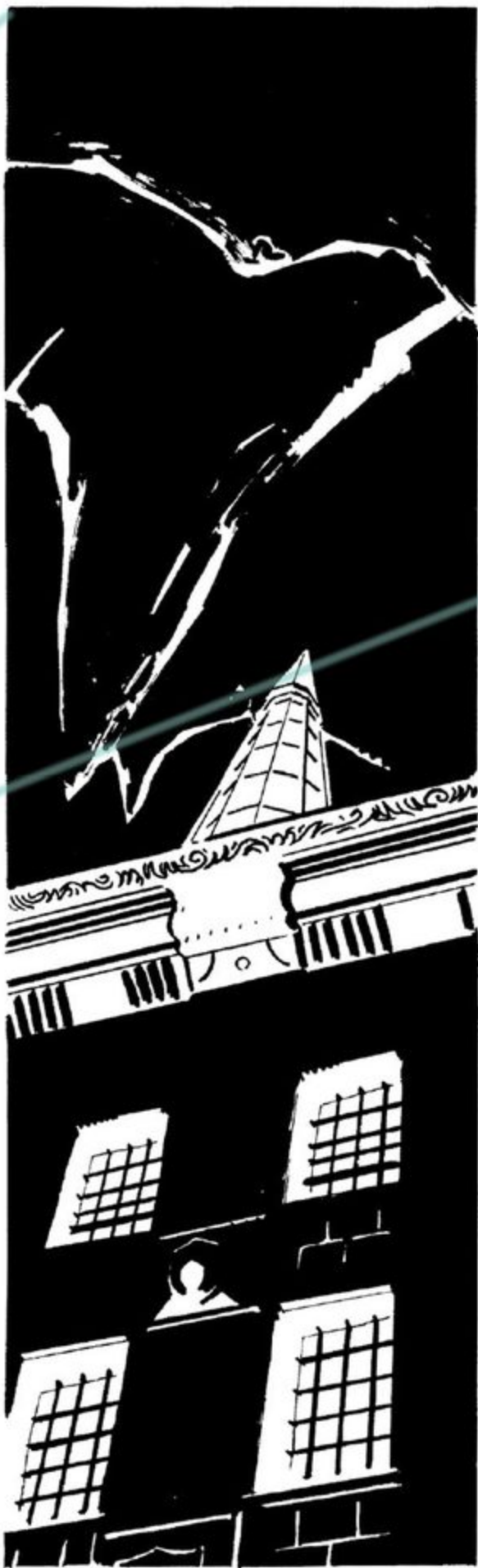


LOW #8

OUT
NOW

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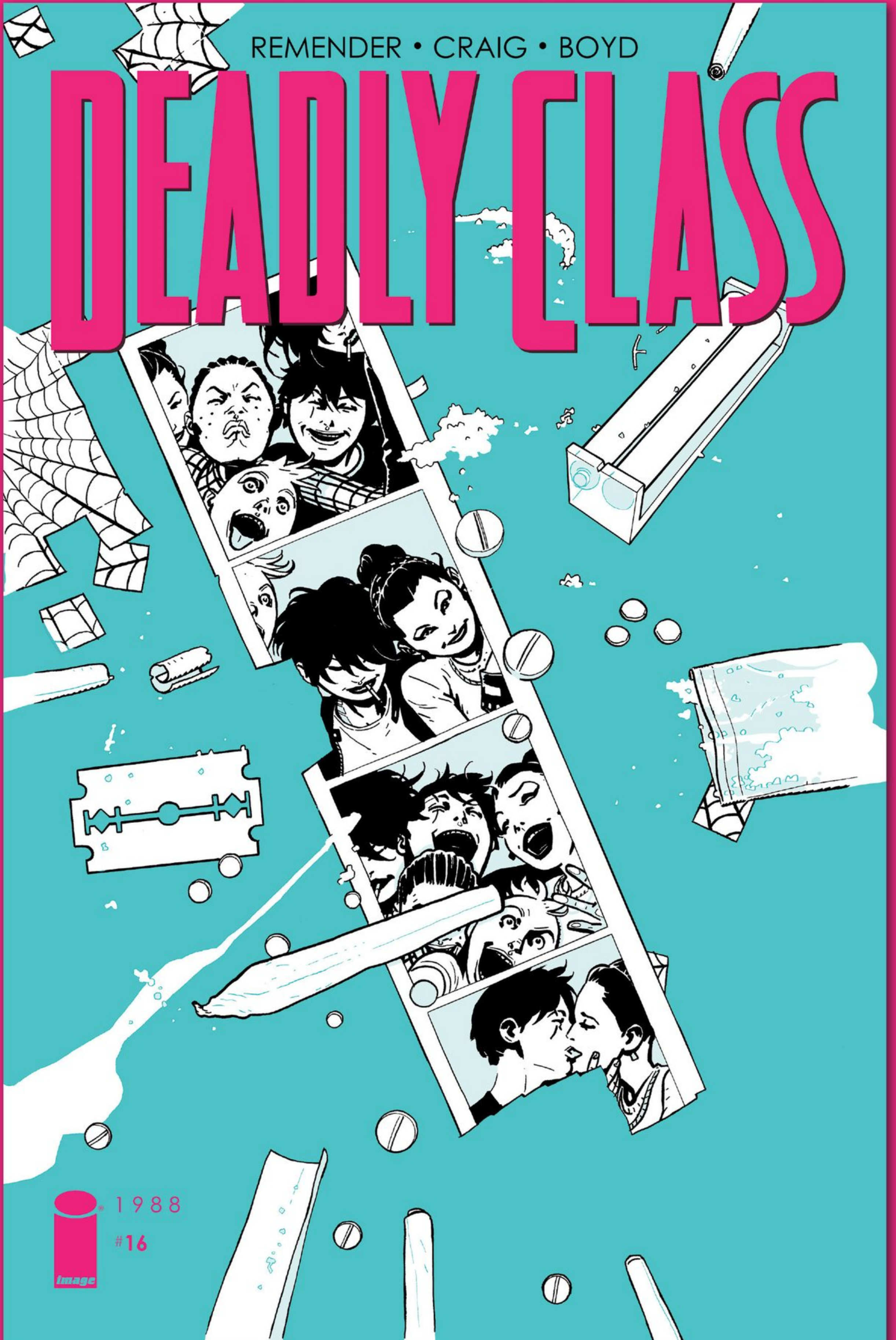
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